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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TASHKENT 001988

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR INL/AEE ANDREW BUHLER AND JOHN LYLE,  
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [EAID](#) [AF](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: MINI-DUBLIN GROUP ALARMED BY AFGHAN DRUG PRODUCTION

REF: TASHKENT 1705

Classified By: Poloff Tim Buckley for reasons 1.4 (B, D)

11. (SBU) Summary. The Ambassador and poloff attended a meeting of the Central Asian Mini-Dublin Group on November 13 to discuss regional narcotics trends and donor country projects. UNODC presented "an increasingly alarming trend" in Afghanistan drug production and described "a record harvest" in 2007 that amounted to USD four billion. UNODC and GOU representatives highlighted increased drug seizures throughout Central Asia, especially in Uzbekistan's Surkhandarya Province and southwestern Tajikistan. UNODC described a new proactive, intel-based counter-narcotics strategy featuring border liaison offices and mobile interdiction teams. The EU's Border Management Programs in Central Asia (BOMCA) expressed pessimism about continuing its border management work due to GOU inertia, and bilateral status reports evidenced only modest counter-narcotics assistance to Uzbekistan. Kamol Dusmetov, Director of the GOU's National Center of Drug Control, noted Uzbekistan is very concerned about the new statistics from Afghanistan and said it is "important to develop international cooperation." The US is not the only country to have encountered difficulty in implementing projects in Uzbekistan in recent years, but the bountiful drug harvest in Afghanistan seems to have the GOU's attention. Enhanced cooperation is possible providing that projects are not linked to more sensitive domestic issues. End summary.

Afghanistan Statistics  
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12. (U) The Mini-Dublin Group is chaired by the Italians and the November 13 meeting was attended by a top GOU drug official (Dusmetov) and other foreign diplomats from Russia, Turkey, Israel, Japan, France, Czech Republic, Tajikistan, and Germany. UNODC presented new data showing "an

increasingly alarming trend" in Afghanistan drug production, including opium, heroin, and cannabis. In 2007 there was a 34 percent increase in opium production (8,200 tons), and the "record harvest" included a yield of 42 kilograms per hectare. The lucrative drug crops account for 53 percent of Afghanistan's gross domestic product (GDP), amounting to USD 4 billion. Farmers in Helmand Province alone earned USD 500 million, according to UNODC's data, and the average annual income for poppy-growing farmers is USD 3,933. The main reasons cited for the increase were poverty, security issues, lack of government control in some regions, and lack of alternatives to poppy cultivation. Ambassador noted U.S. concern about increases in poppy cultivation and opium production and said this pointed to the need for the international community as a whole to redouble its commitment to support Afghan security and reconstruction.

#### Seizures in Central Asia on the Rise

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13. (SBU) UNODC and GOU representatives noted that there has already been a corresponding increase in drug seizures in the Central Asian republics, especially in southwestern Tajikistan and Uzbekistan's Surkhandarya Province, both main transit points from Afghanistan and both high-priority areas for future UNODC projects. UNODC data indicates 57 percent of all heroin seized in Central Asia in 2006 was seized in Tajikistan alone. Kazakhstan reported a 4,600 percent increase in opium seizures between 2002-06. UNODC is worried about the "Columbianization" of the drug trade, although there has thus far been no evidence of major multi-ton shipments. However, Dusmetov noted that the GOU has been

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making bigger seizures, including a major haul of 235 kilograms of heroin seized just days ago in a car which traveled from Surkhandarya Province to Tashkent.

#### UNODC Hopes For Intel-Based Actions

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14. (SBU) UNODC Senior Regional Law Enforcement Advisor Mark Colhoun said the effectiveness of counter-narcotics programs in the region has been limited due to a lack of intelligence-sharing (see refTel). As a result, operations are reactive and "many projects are done in isolation from each other." In response, UNODC is focusing on a new strategy highlighted by border liaison offices (BLO) and mobile interdiction teams (MOBIT), which will supplement projects to strengthen border security and be responsive to intelligence. (Note: Post provided INL-funds for the first border liaison office project, which will be implemented by UNODC on the Uzbek-Tajik border in 2008. The USG was given credit for this support at the meeting. UNODC called for increased funding support for the Tajikistan portions of this project. End note.) Meeting participants expressed high hopes for the new Central Asia Regional Information and Coordination Center (CARICC), which Colhoun heralded as "a major step forward." CARICC, which would be similar to Europol, has just begun a pilot phase of operations, but Colhoun noted that its success will depend on the national governments of each country. UNODC also called for Afghanistan to formally be invited to join CARICC in order to integrate as much information as possible in the counter-narcotics effort.

#### BOMCA Pessimistic About Uzbekistan

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15. (SBU) Pierre-Paul Anthleunissens, Chief Technical Advisor of the EU-organized BOMCA, noted there "are huge administrative problems" that threaten the viability of BOMCA programs in Uzbekistan. The GOU has still not signed a necessary agreement to enable BOMCA to proceed with its activities, and he is "very pessimistic" about the situation but conceded "there is still small hope." Some earmarked

funds have already been redistributed to other countries due to the delays and all BOMCA activity in Uzbekistan could be stopped, including trainings, a precursor project, a drug demand reduction program in Uzbek prisons, and an awareness-raising campaign.

#### Bilateral Activity

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¶6. (SBU) Diplomats from each of the countries presented an overview of their bilateral assistance projects in counter-narcotics, with a particular emphasis on Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. In general, the donor scene is pretty quiet in Uzbekistan, and it is noteworthy that our Embassy had more tangible projects to report on than most others present despite the chill in bilateral relations over the past few years. European representatives generally indicated that they are supporting multilateral programs, but given the difficulties of such entities as BOMCA, this means there is not a lot happening.

¶7. (SBU) France reported that they will be doing a precursor project on the China-Kazakhstan border. Germany wants to engage Turkmenistan "after the substantial political change there" and will focus on drug "mules" who transport drugs to Europe. Russia noted trainings at the Domodedovo Center in the framework of the NATO-Russia Partnership, which will continue with eight sessions in 2008. The Israeli Ambassador

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said they do not have relations with Afghanistan and are mostly involved with agricultural or medicine assistance projects in Uzbekistan. However, Israel would consider supporting multilateral counter-narcotics assistance in Central Asia. Turkey reported no projects in 2007 with Uzbekistan, but highlighted training programs for Tajik law enforcement officers at the TADOC academy in conjunction with UNODC. The Japanese Ambassador mentioned the "Central Asia Plus Japan" program and added that "drug prevention is a ripe area for regional cooperation". Japan is also conducting a seminar on criminal justice with Central Asia and plans to provide x-ray machines to some border checkpoints. The Czechs have no bilateral projects with Uzbekistan and emphasized that Afghanistan is their major regional focus. The Tajik Ambassador thanked the EU and particularly Germany for contributions and exchange programs.

#### GOU Wants to Enhance Cooperation

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¶8. (SBU) Dusmetov stated that the "increased flow of drugs is very serious" and that "routes from the south are predominant." He noted that foreign nationals are increasingly smuggling narcotics through Uzbekistan and that 22 Afghans have been arrested this year. He discussed the increase of large-quantity drug seizures in the past year and lamented the societal consequences Uzbekistan has experienced from drugs, including the spread of HIV to 11,200 registered users, 45 percent of whom are drug abusers. (Note: Most observers agree the actual number of HIV-infected people and drug abusers in Uzbekistan is far greater than the official statistics, but it is significant that Dusmetov recognized the problem in his remarks. End note). Dusmetov stated the GOU "cannot relax given this serious situation" and said "it is important to further develop international cooperation." He called for more border control and drug demand reduction projects.

#### Comment

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¶9. (C) The GOU seems genuinely alarmed by the sobering drug statistics coming out of Afghanistan and it would likely be more receptive to drug demand reduction, border security, and law enforcement training projects. Such projects suit the GOU's interests and do not touch on sensitive issues it would

rather avoid. Dusmetov's remarks track with other hints we have received from the GOU recently, yet it is unclear why the GOU has been reluctant to sign an agreement with BOMCA, especially now that the EU has softened sanctions. Representatives from other countries also indicated that counter-narcotics programs in response to the growing drug threat from Afghanistan are a priority, yet it is clear that the U.S. was not alone in scaling down assistance projects over the past few years. Our presentation was an opportunity to remind the GOU representatives and other diplomatic colleagues that the USG remains a major player in the regional counter-narcotics effort.

NORLAND